

Iowa Medical Society

Physician Assistants Talking Points

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Physician Assistants (PA's) lack adequate education and training to practice independently

- PA training, by design, is for them to be under a physician's oversight.
- Physician training is four years plus 3-7 years of residency and 10,000-16,000 hours of training. PA's training is two years, with no residency and only 2,000 hours of training.
- PAs do not specialize. This bill would allow a PA to switch between specialties unlike physicians
- A completed study by the Physician Assistant Education Association asked program directors, past presidents, and medical directors if "PA program's current curriculum already prepare your graduates to practice without a supervisory, collaborating, or other specific relationship with a physician?"
 - 100% of past presidents responded "no"
 - 89% of medical directors responded "no"
 - 86% of program directors responded "no"

Expanded Independent Practice Does Not Expand Rural Access

- A ten-year study showed that PAs, and nurse practitioners work alongside physicians in urban and suburban areas, not rural areas.
- An example: Only 11% of PAs practiced in rural communities following expansion of PA scope for independent practice in Arizona under attempts to expand rural access.

Independent Scope Expansion Increases Healthcare Costs & Lowers Quality

- Patients with non-physician primary care providers had \$43 higher spending per member per month compared to those who had a physician, translating to \$10.3 million more in annual spending.
- 8.4% of physician assistants prescribed opioids to over half of their patients, compared to 1.3% of physicians.
- X-ray ordering among non-physicians is increased by as much as 441% compared to physicians
- Non-physicians needed double the number of biopsies to screen for skin cancer.

Health care teams working together – with physicians in the lead – is critical to having the best and safest outcomes.